



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM

REPORT TO THE CLERGY LAITY CONGRESS **OUTREACH & EVANGELISM**

July 2008 ❖ Washington, DC

Liaison to the Holy Eparchial Synod: His Eminence Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh
Archdiocesan Council Committee Chair: Mrs. Catherine Lingas
Staff: Fr. James Kordaris, Director

“Gather My People to My Home”

The interviewer asked, “How many churches have you converted to Orthodox Christianity?” The answer was “None.”

Converting churches is an impressive feat, but even if it occurs often, it is unlikely to revitalize or grow existing parishes. Unless we instill an outreach mindset in our parishes, they will not grow. But with over 600 priests, over 6,000 parish council members, and hundreds of thousands of active parishioners, we have an army of believers, each of whom could invite one or more people to church.

*If you want to fill a dozen milk bottles, you can't stand back and spray them with a hose.
You'll get them wet but you won't fill them.
...You have to fill them one at a time.*

Outreach is a Person-to-Person Process

Research has shown that ninety-six percent of the unchurched are at least somewhat likely to attend church if they are invited (Rainer). In other words, more than nine out of ten unchurched individuals would come to church if invited. We need to invite them, and we need to be ready for them when they walk through our doors.

Since inception five years ago, the Department of Outreach & Evangelism has focused its efforts on providing a variety of resources and programs to priests and parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese to assist them in revitalizing the faith of active Orthodox Christians; reaching out to inactive Orthodox Christians, and offering the Orthodox Christian faith to all who would receive it. The DOE makes every effort to coordinate its efforts with other departments and organizations of the Archdiocese.

FIVE-POINT MISSION

1. Revitalize the faith of active Orthodox Christians;
2. Reach out to inactive Orthodox Christians;
3. Meet the needs of those inquiring about the Orthodox Christian faith;
4. Offer the tools for parish renewal; and
5. Offer guidance in the establishment of new parishes.

VISION

As the visible presence of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, the parish is called to witness to those within and those outside the community of believers. If we believe that in Orthodoxy we have the fullness of the Truth, then we have the great responsibility to share it with all people.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Over the past two years, the Committee for Outreach & Evangelism has met regularly by teleconference and in conjunction with meetings of the Archdiocesan Council. Committee members agree that there is a need to deepen the faith of our people, turning their perspective outward and helping those who are searching. Because of our changing cultural landscape, people are in need of an unchanging Christianity. Our parishes need to develop a mindset for outreach and evangelism

Parish Outreach Coordinators, mandated for every parish at the 2006 Clergy-Laity Congress in Nashville, will be one key avenue for disseminating information and programs to the parishes. Given the current workload of most parish clergy, the position of Parish Outreach Coordinator will be essential to the mission of this department. A small number of clergy responded to our initial request to appoint a Parish Outreach Coordinator. Additional effort will be expended to establish Parish Outreach Coordinators in every parish.

THE NEED TO BE INFECTED

A good priest once asked “Doesn’t renewal have to come first before we can evangelize others? Don’t we have to be infected with Christ before we can be contagious?” This is why education is the key to bringing others to Orthodoxy – education of faithful Orthodox and education of the inquirer. The DOE has assembled an extensive variety of educational resources from Greek Orthodox priests, theologians and laypersons for sharing the faith with those who want to learn. These are distributed throughout the Church year in hard copy and electronically through a number of listservs at the appropriate time in the Church calendar. These resources are also available on the Outreach & Evangelism web site: www.Outreach.goarch.org.

INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: *Opportunity for Outreach*

With the rate of intermarriage in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in excess of 50%, it is imperative that we serve our parishioners and their current or future non-Orthodox spouse. The DOE Director meets regularly with Fr. Charles Joanides of the Department of Interfaith Marriage to develop an educational program and accompanying ministry resources focusing on the needs of intermarried couples (one Orthodox / one non-Orthodox). This effort will culminate in an educational session and packet of materials offered at this Clergy-Laity Congress and eventually in the metropolises.

PARISH COUNCIL TRAINING: *Instilling an Outreach Mindset*

DOE is working with the Administration Committee in their effort to develop a national Parish Council training program and revise the Parish Council Handbook. Parish leadership is critical to effective outreach and evangelism. It is important to instill an outreach mindset in our parish leaders.

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

DOE recently participated in an inter-Orthodox training program on church development/growth, providing a viable framework for analyzing strengths and weaknesses of an individual parish and for developing a strategy to overcome weaknesses and capitalize on strengths. This will be made available initially to several test parishes and then considered for national rollout. Additional consultants will be trained to assist in implementation of the program. Materials are currently being edited by Orthodox Christian clergy to make them more applicable to our parishes.

VISITOR CARDS & RACK

There has been an excellent response from the parishes for the recently-developed parish Visitor Card Display which incorporates the visitor card on a display welcoming the visitor to the parish. A supply of 100 personalized visitor cards is included with the display. Since offering the Visitor Cards & Display Rack in late August of 2007, orders have been filled for nearly 100 parishes.



FIND YOUR SPIRITUAL HOME

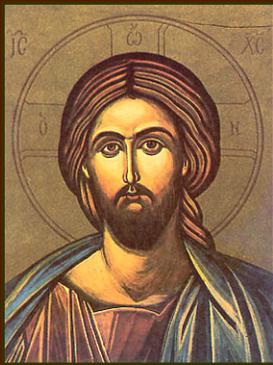
IN THE

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SUNDAY SERVICES

ORTHROS 9:00 AM ❖ DIVINE LITURGY 10:00 AM

~ All are Welcome ~



SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

212/265-7808 + www.SaintGeorgeNYC.org

WELCOME BANNERS: GENERAL / NATIVITY / GREAT LENT

Many parishes are utilizing a series of 3 by 6 foot vinyl outdoor welcome banners developed for the parishes. DOE offers a general welcome banner which states "Find Your Spiritual Home in the Orthodox Christian Church," a Lenten banner which states, "Join us on a Lenten Journey to the Resurrection," and a Nativity banner which states, "Christ is Born. Glorify Him!" One mission-minded priest has commented that he is not sure if the banner has brought in new parishioners but it is serving to instill a missionary mindset among his parishioners.

Family Outreach Sunday

A Day of Outreach & Fellowship
for Orthodox Christian Families & Friends

*"Now reach out as never before, rouse yourselves up,
and let each person enter the Church accompanied by a member of his family..."*
~ St. John Chrysostom ~

Bring your family & friends to church for special day of worship and fellowship.

A Program of the GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE DEPARTMENT OF OUTREACH & EVANGELISM
In Coordination with The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society and the Center for Family Care at Saint Basil Academy
For more information visit: www.outreach.goarch.org

FAMILY OUTREACH SUNDAY

Research has shown that 96% of unchurched individuals in America would attend church if invited. The Outreach Sunday program encourages active parishioners to invite inactive family members and Orthodox Christian friends for a special day of fellowship and spiritual renewal. Many are aware of Orthodox friends and relatives that have fallen away from active involvement in the Church. Jesus Christ calls each one of us to engage in active outreach to these relatives and friends

Family Outreach Sunday has been developed in cooperation with the Ladies Philoptochos Society and the Center for Family Care at Saint Basil Academy. National Philoptochos President Georgia Skeadas describes this initiative as "a noteworthy program that the National Philoptochos Society wholeheartedly endorses and supports." Father Constantine Sitaras, Director of the Center for Family Care at Saint Basil Academy has praised Family Outreach Sunday as "...an excellent complement to our efforts to affirm the importance of the family as a blessed gift from God and to address the specific needs of families as they try to live in a very challenging culture and world. An article on Outreach Sunday appeared in the Orthodox Observer in Fall 2007.

THE DENVER CLERGY INTERACTIVE OUTREACH E-MAIL LISTSERV

Following ongoing discussions with the Chancellor of the Denver Metropolis, a program was initiated by the DOE through which all clergy of the Denver Metropolis are able to post their ideas, concerns, successful ministries and more to an E-Mail listserv which is immediately sent to all clergy of the Metropolis. As this online discussion unfolds, the DOE is able to assess the concerns of the parish priests, offer insights, suggest available resources and develop new resources to meet the needs of the parishes.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

SVS Orthodox Education Day

DOE recently participated in a Panel Discussion on Evangelization with counterparts from the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) and the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Ancient Faith Radio

The Director of Outreach & Evangelism was recently interviewed by Ancient Faith Radio regarding the Greek Orthodox approach to outreach and evangelism for their Illumined Heart program

Hellenic College & Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

The Department makes every effort to visit the HC/HC campus, share the vision and resources of the department and speak to classes dealing with Mission and Pastoral Ministry. In Fall Semester 2007, the Director visited a class taught by Fr. Luke Veronis on the topic of instilling a missionary mindset in the parish.

PRAXIS Magazine

The DOE contributed an article to the Fall 2007 issue of the Department of Religious Education's *Praxis Magazine* which was dedicated to the catechumen.

Parish Outreach & Evangelism Coordinators

The 2006 Clergy-Laity Congress in Nashville passed a resolution requiring that every parish establish a Committee for Missions, Outreach & Evangelism. Following up on this resolution, the Department has contacted every parish and provided a form for designation of a Parish Outreach & Evangelism Coordinator. A listserv has been created to facilitate communication with and among parish coordinators. Additional follow-up is needed.

The Home Mission Parish Program

The purpose of this program is to encourage the establishment of Greek Orthodox Parishes and to provide support for small Greek Orthodox Parishes which are striving to become self-supporting. With the generous assistance of the Leadership 100 Home Missions Grant, The Home Mission Parish Program provides assistance to parishes throughout the Archdiocese of America in their critical first years of existence. In special situations assistance may also be provided to parishes that have declined but are in a period of renewal. There are currently 12 parishes receiving some level of support through the program to make it financially feasible for a priest to be assigned, providing much-needed consistency in leadership in the critical stages of parish formation and renewal, increasing the likelihood of a parish becoming self-sufficient. The planting of new parishes is limited by the shortage of available clergy. For this reason, the DOE will work with the parishes in conjunction with Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology to encourage young men to consider preparation for the priesthood.



St. Andrew the Apostle Mission Parish in San Luis Obispo

Lay Ministry

Lay Ministry is a key element in the process of parish renewal. The parish priest is called to assess the gifts of his lay leadership and to empower them to spearhead suitable lay ministries under his guidance. In the words of St. John Chrysostom: *“The most basic task of the Church leader is to discern the spiritual gifts of all those under his authority, and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full for the benefit of all. Only a person who can discern the gifts of others and can humbly rejoice at the flowering of those gifts is fit to lead the Church.”*

“And the Lord added to their number daily...” Acts 2:47 (NIV)

In Acts 2 we read, “The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” If we do the work of ministry, reflecting the light and the love of Christ, others will come. God will place us in situations to share our faith. As He called upon His disciples on the day of His Ascension, He has also called upon each one of us to be His witnesses *“...in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Respectfully submitted,

Father James W. Kordaris, Director
Outreach & Evangelism